

Trail Talk

Conasauga Ranger District

February – March 2011



"A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise."

---Aldo Leopold



Northern Illinois Students on Alternative Spring Break



Working Weekend #59 trail volunteers

When we ask you, "why do you volunteer your precious time?", we hear the same answer time after time, "a love of the land, and a desire to give something back."

Team Conasauga exists due to your dedication. What can we say but...

Thank You!



February 2011- tough guy **Jim Leatherwood** along with his wife **Cindy Leatherwood** began the month clearing blow downs on the Bear Creek Trail...several days later, **Jim Leatherwood** also worked with **Chuck Brock and Wanda Brown** crosscutting blow downs on the Hickory Creek Trail from Mill Creek to Panther Creek intersection...**Matt Smith** of SORBA was out and about

in the Stover Creek area picking up garbage around the Appalachian and Benton MacKaye Trails...**Gennie Dasinger** also of SORBA picked up trash for several hours along the Pinhoti Trail from Snake Creek to Dug Gap...doing his appointed monthly patrols on the Beech Bottom Trail and Jacks River Falls area was **Mark Voykovic** making sure no illegal fire rings and no garbage were found in the closed off area...before the volunteer working weekend, **Gail Milner** spent two days along different sections of the Iron Mtn. trail scouting out what work needed to be done...Working Weekend #59 saw a great turnout of volunteers as this was the first gathering

since January's workday was cancelled due to inclement weather. Those that gave of their time to maintain water bars, trim brush, and cut blow downs on the Iron Mtn., Conasauga River and Horseshoe Bend Trails were **Doug Allen, Chuck Brock, Amos Burrell, Julia Chromiak, Connor Elrod, Jim Holland, Wayne Horton, Jim Leatherwood, Jim McGarvey, Gail Milner, Cindy Mitchell, Wayne Pattillo, Austin Roland, Taylor Slate, Nicole Warren-Miller, Larry Wheat, Jim Bishop, Tannis Blackwell, Tom Blackwell, Wanda Brown, David**



Volunteers "down n' dirty" on Iron Mountain Trail

Daughtrey, Jim Moran, Steve Moran, Tom Owens, Helen Chamberlain, and Al Sanders...another

SORBA member, **Marcus Moore** cleared out dead trees from the Stover Creek area...**Wanda Brown** continued the important task of keeping up with the volunteer hours and projects in the database for several hours this month ...making sure the west side of the District didn't go unnoticed, **Fred Pilcher** picked up trash and cleaned up dispersed campsites for several days this month in the Dry Creek and Manning Mill areas...BMTA members **Arthur Foley and Bill Hamrick** worked on a section of the Benton MacKaye Trail doing a variety of trail work...several of our trusty volunteers, **Troy and Wanda Brown, Amos Burrell and Wayne Pattillo**, headed out to the popular Beech Bottom Trail to tackle a number of blow downs that had come across the trail during the winter...after a slow start due to the harsh winter conditions, a whopping **425 hours** were given to the cause this month!!! This just goes to show what our volunteers are made of! THANKS TEAM CONASAUGA!!!

March 2011- SORBA members started things off on the first weekend of the month...**Matt Smith** picked up trash in the Stover Creek/Appalachian Trail area while **Gennie Dasinger** picked up trash in the Snake Creek to Dug Gap Pinhoti Trail area of the Forest...BMTA members were also out that weekend, including **Walter Cook and George Owen** who worked on a planned reroute of the Benton MacKaye Trail from Flat Top Mtn. to Dyer Gap...**Fred Pilcher**, our steadfast volunteer on the west side, kept the recreation areas looking good by picking up garbage at the Johns Mtn. Overlook, the Pocket Picnic area and the Chestnut Mtn. Shooting

Range...TEAM Conasauga joined forces with REI Kennesaw to hold a volunteer recruitment drive at the REI store for a weekend; those that came out to support the effort were **Troy and Wanda Brown, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, Chuck Brock, Jim Leatherwood, Wayne Pattillo, and Nicole Warren-Miller**...on behalf of NWGA SORBA, Dalton Boy Scout Troop 111 picked up several bags of garbage along a section of the Pinhoti Trail after the Snake Creek Gap Time Trials; those who participated were **Patrick Hohol, Chris Hohol, Van Brown, Tyler Brown, Matt Franey, Tyler Dill, Ryan Clark, Andrew Bridges, Melanie Franey, Bob Oxford, and Gary Greenway**...the Conasauga Ranger District hosted a group of college students from Northern Illinois University during their spring break to work on some of the Cohutta Wilderness trails...the students who maintained 100+ water bars on the Tearbitches Trail were **Isabelle Bourgeois, Stephanie Bourgeois, Edina Daughtery, Keith Gortowski, Adam Kutryb, Christine Lagattolla, Jackie Lopez, Tai Nguyen, Sivaseeth Pandi, Ross Prolic, Jackie Seidl, Stephanie Seidl, Nick Skuban,**



NIU students ready for backpacking/trailwork in the Cohuttas

Kevin Tony, and Mark Woodbury...intending to help the NIU students for the day but instead finding themselves maintaining water bars on the Hickory Creek Trail from the Conasauga River up to the switchback on the trail were **Jim Bishop and Wayne Pattillo**...members of the SAWS group, **Russell Childers, Ellen Daniel, Roger Daniel, Rick Foster, and Bill Hodge** took to the Beech Bottom Trail to crosscut blow downs all the way to the river crossing below Jacks River Falls...our crosscut saw experts, **Troy and Wanda Brown** made their way down Horseshoe Bend Trail to remove any trees laying across the trail...CDTV officers **Jim Bishop, Wanda Brown, Bob Korch, Tom Owens, Wayne Pattillo, Mark Voykovic and Nicole Warren-Miller** met together to discuss informing the public of wilderness rules, regulations and practices by developing educational material...**Wanda Brown** does a terrific job putting in several hours worth of work on the volunteer database...in spite of the rain-out on the volunteer workday, a number of people still showed up hoping to get in on the fun at Rough Ridge Trail, and a few including **Robert Edmondson, Deede Edmondson and Robbie Edmondson** picked up trash along the Forest Service roads...others who showed up and still got credit for their travel were **Jim Bishop, Tom and Tannis Blackwell, John Franetic, Jim Leatherwood, Tom Owens and Nicole Warren-Miller**...two SORBA members, **Matt Smith and Phillip White** closed out the month by cutting blow downs on trails in the Stover Creek, Middle Mtn., Swamp Creek, and Johns Mtn. areas...our volunteers really came out in force this month giving a very impressive **1,308.25 hours** worth of hard work!!! Your dedication is awe inspiring! Team Conasauga is the best!!!





As the woods begin to “green up”, it is wise to be on the lookout for the “Untouchables”, poison ivy, poison oak, and poison sumac. While you can get the rash at any time of the year, you are more prone to become infected during the active growing season. Remember that all parts of the plant can cause a reaction...the leaves, stem, hairy vine, and white berries (in fall) should all be avoided. And, just because you have been immune to the plant’s effects in the past doesn’t mean you will always be immune. Remember...**LEAVES OF THREE, LET IT BE.**



POISON IVY



POISON OAK



POISON SUMAC

POISON IVY

HOW IT GROWS: Shrub, vine, or small plant

WHERE IT IS:

Everywhere in U.S.A.

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Always has three shiny leaves; also greenish-white flowers and clusters of berries

POISON OAK

HOW IT GROWS:

Usually in shrubs, sometimes in vines

WHERE IT IS:

Widespread in California; also in other Western states and Southeast

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Always has three leaves; also greenish-white flowers and clusters of berries

POISON SUMAC

HOW IT GROWS:

As a woody shrub, or a tree ranging from 5 to 25 feet tall

WHERE IT GROWS:

Most of the eastern third of the United States

WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE:

Branches usually contain nine leaves: four rows of two and one leaf at end

If you make contact with one of these “untouchable” plants and develop a rash, redness, blisters, swelling, burning, or itching:

- Remove contaminated clothing
- Wash affected area of skin with soap and water
- If rash is mild, apply calamine lotion or other soothing lotion
- If reaction is troublesome, or if you have had previous severe reactions in similar situations, seek medical care *immediately*

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THE UNTOUCHABLES



LEAVE NO TRACE

For more Leave No Trace information visit: www.lnt.org

- PLAN AHEAD AND PREPARE
- TRAVEL AND CAMP ON DURABLE SURFACES
- DISPOSE OF WASTE PROPERLY
- LEAVE WHAT YOU FIND
- MINIMIZE CAMPFIRE IMPACTS
- RESPECT WILDLIFE
- BE CONSIDERATE OF OTHER VISITORS



Let's revisit this topic one last time as we look at the last principle...**Be Considerate of Other Visitors**

The growing popularity of our wildlands requires us to embrace an outdoor etiquette and maintain a cooperative spirit. More often than not, our wilderness experiences ultimately depend on our treatment of others and their attitudes toward us. How would you rate your wilderness manners?

- ✓ Respect other visitors and protect the quality of their experience.
- ✓ Be courteous. Yield to other users on the trail.
- ✓ Step to the downhill side of the trail when encountering pack stock.
- ✓ Take breaks and camp away from trails and other visitors.
- ✓ Let nature's sounds prevail. Avoid loud voices and noises.

National Trails Day 2011

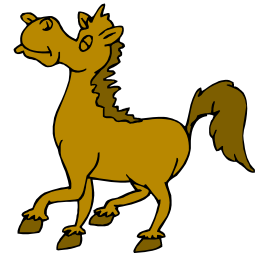


The Conasauga Ranger District will be hosting its 19th annual National Trails Day celebration on Saturday, June 4th. The Sumac Creek Trail will be the site of this year's trail maintenance event. This popular equestrian, mountain biking and hiking trail is quite grown over and in dire need of Team Conasauga's TLC (trail loving care). We will be trimming and removing blowdowns. This is always our biggest trail event of the year. We need a strong showing by hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers to successfully complete work on this 12-mile, figure-8, loop trail. Join us and "make a difference!" We will be meeting at 9 AM at the Sumac Creek Trailhead on Forest Road 17.

The Backcountry Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG) will again be hosting an alternative event on the Conasauga District. Volunteers will be maintaining the South Fork Trail and the connecting Pinhoti Trail (to include mowing with a bushhog) and tackling all the maintenance tasks needed at the Jacks River Fields Campground and Horse Camp. This is a great event for equestrians and other interested volunteers. The BCHNG have made this an awesome, fun-filled day with food and music at the campground following the workday. Plan to meet at the campground by 9 AM.



NEW EQUESTRIAN TRAIL ADVOCATE BEING FORMED IN NORTHWEST GEORGIA



Jim McGarvey, Chairman of Back Country Horsemen of Georgia, announced that a fourth chapter, Back Country Horsemen of North West Georgia (BCHNWG), will be formed to serve the northwest region of Georgia. This includes trails maintenance for the western half of the Cohutta Wilderness and the western side of the Conasauga Ranger District, to include the Pinhoti Trail and the newly opened Dry Creek Trail System, as well as trail responsibilities on other federal, state, and county-owned land in the vicinity.

The Back Country Horsemen of America (BCHA) is a national organization dedicated to perpetuating the common sense use and enjoyment of horses in America's backcountry and to assist land management agencies in their maintenance and management of equine-related trails and facilities. BCHA has over 13,000 members and organizations in 27 states. The Back Country Horsemen of Georgia (BCHGA) currently has three BCH chapters: North, Northeast and Middle Georgia.

A Steering Committee has been assembled to guide formation of BCHNWG with objectives of having the chapter active by this May and completing a trail service project on National Trails Day (see Sumac Creek Trail project). Soon one or more public Organizational Meetings will be announced, at which time BCHNWG goals and activities will be explained fully and all interested persons will be encouraged to join as chapter members.

Persons interested in supporting the Steering Committee or registering as Chapter members may contact Larry Wheat at l.wheat@mindspring.com or by calling 770-595-1913.



CONASAUGA BITS AND PIECES

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid update. The hemlock woolly adelgid, a tiny insect first detected in the western U.S. in 1924, kills eastern and Caroline hemlocks within a few years of infesting them. The devastation caused by the hemlock woolly adelgid cannot be underestimated. Foresters warn of a potential disaster comparable to the chestnut blight. While the infestation has now spread across the entire Cohutta mountain range, mortality has been minimal thus far. The good news is that treatment efforts have been successful. Starting in 2009, several hemlock stands have been treated across the Conasauga Ranger District, which entails the

treatment of individual trees with pesticide. This year one of the stands to be treated is located on the Jacks River near the mouth of Penitentiary Branch and Rough Creek.

Back Country Horsemen of North Georgia (BCHNG) grant approved. Carlos Martel reported that a BCHNG grant application submitted to the American Quarter Horse Association was approved for equipment and tools to maintain the Jacks River Fields Campground and Horse Camp and nearby trails. The BCHNG adopted the Jacks River Fields in 2007, and have essentially performed all the routine maintenance at the campground since then. The equestrian organization has purchased a zero-turning radius mower and a trailer as well as other trail tools and supplies with the grant money. Congratulations BCHNG!

Jim McGarvey named to national committee. Congratulations also go out to Jim McGarvey for being named to the National Executive Committee of Back Country Horsemen of America. Now Jim will be able to outreach Team Conasauga clear across the country. Atta-boy, Jim!

Beech Bottom Trail Relocation project scoping period over. A proposal to relocate about 600 feet of the Beech Bottom Trail at a washed out, unnamed stream has completed its scoping period. Two other projects were included in the scoping notice: South Fork Trail repair and the opening of the Horseshoe Bend Connector Trail. The three projects will now undergo an environmental analysis to address social and resource issues related to the proposals. More information on the project is available on the Forest website at www.fs.usda.gov/conf.

Pinhoti Trail Relocation project scoping period open. A proposal to relocate a section of the Pinhoti Trail that follows the Peebles Lake Road, FS 3, in Murray County is now available for public input. Trail users currently stay on Peebles Lake Road for about 5 miles. The project would allow users the opportunity to avoid motor vehicle traffic, thus improving user safety and providing a more scenic route. About 1.9 miles of new trail construction would be needed on national forest land to link up with a new trail being constructed by SORBA, BCH and the GA Pinhoti Trail Association on Conservation Fund property near Dennis Mill. To comment on the project, please respond by May 27th to the Conasauga Ranger District, Attn: Dennis Mill Pinhoti Trail Project.

Now You Know!





MARK YOUR CALENDARS...

- **May 20-21**

Working Weekend #60, Hickory Creek Trail-Panther Creek Trail—waterbar/drain dip maintenance, trimming, blow down removal. Equestrians needed. Car camping at the Ball Field Group Camping Area. Meet at the Hickory Creek Trailhead near Mill Creek at 9AM each day.

- **June 4**

National Trails Day! Sumac Creek multi-use trail – trimming and blow down removal. Trail is open to hikers, equestrians and mountain bikers. More information coming soon.

- **July 16**

Emery Creek Trail – trimming/slingblading, waterbar/dip maintenance, tread repair.

- **August 20**

Working Weekend #61, Tearbitches Trail-Chestnut Lead Trail – trimming, slingblading

- **September 17 TBA**

- **October 15**

Annual Volunteer Appreciation Picnic and Awards Ceremony

If you are interested, please contact Larry at 706-695-6736 x 103 or e-mail lrthomas@fs.fed.us

Note: In addition to these scheduled workdays, we are trying to find some volunteers who are interested in working independently or with a small group to tackle smaller projects.



Kirk's Cycle Shop spent the day cleaning up trash at Houston Valley



NIU students enjoying the day



Nothing better than time spent in the forest!



Team Conasauga hittin' the trail